

My name is Robert Schulz, I go by the nickname of Skip. I want to thank this Michigan State Senate Committee for giving me the chance to testify in support of SB 1031.

What prompted me to try to get SB 1031 passed was when I was an Ontonagon County Commissioner, our County Board put one of our County Forests up for a Timber Harvest. As a County Commissioner I asked that the Forester build a 'landing' area by our County Road with the intent to turn that 'landing' area into a Parking Lot and a Horse Corral. Then I asked that the County allow some of the logging roads to be turned into Equestrian Trails. I also asked that the organization that I helped form and am currently the President of, Michigan Trails and Recreation Alliance of Land and the Environment, commonly known as Mi-TRALE, be allowed to develop an Equestrian Trail System on this property.

I was then informed by an employee of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Forestry Division, about a 1931 law that prohibited County Forests that were deeded by the State to the County. The law does not allow those County Forests to be used for anything other than Timber Management. However hunting and fishing is allowed on those properties.

It's important to remember, Ontonagon County Board of Commissioners, put this property up for Timber Harvest 'bids.' The original intent of the law WAS and IS for Timber Harvest. All we wanted to do was to take advantage of a Timber Harvest on a County Forest to develop a form of Recreation for not only our County residents, Michigan residents, but also people willing to come to our area and invest in our Tourism economy.

Our intent was NOT to prohibit future Timber Harvests. Michigan has thousands of miles of trails, many of which are on DNR Managed State Forests, and many have Timber Harvests on or around them. The volunteers in Trail Organizations have not had, or do have, a problem with erecting signs and when needed adjust by 're-routing' the trails. Mi-TRALE has done this, and will have to work around a Timber Harvest this summer on the popular Bill Nichols ORV/Snowmobile trail.

By passing SB 1031, Michigan County Forests will have the opportunity to not only continue to be managed for Timber Harvest, but also the opportunity to have multiple-use trails. Trails that provide families for the chance to recreate together. Trails that provide our senior citizens with access opportunities that they need to see the beauty of our forests. Trails that provide our residents with the opportunity to enjoy. Trails that will enhance our Tourism Industry, and show our visitors what "Pure Michigan County Forests" are all about.

Please support SB 1031. Again, thank-you for giving me the honor and privilage to testify.

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